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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on how U.S. history teachers utilize secondary U.S. history textbooks. The report addresses the questions of: (1) "How do teachers utilize previously studied textbooks in classroom situations?"; (2) "How do teachers deal with the technical knowledge of textbooks?"; (3) "What are possible factors that influence textbook usage?"; and (4) "Do secondary history teachers engage in and encourage students to engage in critical reflection or emancipatory knowledge?" Nine teachers participated in the study, six men and three women representing seven school districts, four rural and three urban. Interviews were conducted with the teachers with data analysis focusing on recurring themes or response patterns emerging from the interviews. Results indicate that the authority of the textbook is not absolute. Textbook knowledge does not pass perfectly from text to student. The way a teacher handles the given textbook and related materials determines the impressions of U.S. history that students have the opportunity to learn. Furthermore, just because teachers possess the ability to critique and challenge U.S. history textbooks, they do not necessarily engage in this process with any consistency. (Contains 30 references.) (EH)

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American History by the Book: Teachers Using Textbooks.

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A Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, California, April, 1995

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Textbooks are powerful forces in American education that mirror the dominant beliefs and values of the wider society. The textbook should be considered an important cultural artifact since it reflects a national consensus regarding the knowledge and values that certain members of society want transmitted to their children. Playing a central role in the transmission of culturally significant knowledge, the content and usage of textbooks become a critical issue. As Madsen (1984) argues "Americans have great faith in the power of the textbook to educate their youth. And because they do exercise such faith, professional educators ought to pay more attention to the making and using of books than they ordinarily do" (p. 340).

Since its publication, countless critics have critiqued the content and usage of U. S. history textbooks (Anyon 1979; Apple & Christian-Smith 1991; Carlson 1989; Ellington 1986; FitzGerald 1979; Fox & Hess 1972; Garcia & Woodrick 1979; Garcia & Tanner 1985; Gottlieb 1989; Luke, De Castell, & Luke 1989; Olson 1989; Selke 1983; Sewall 1988; Sosniak & Perlman 1990; Thompson & Tetrault 1986; and Vitz 1986). Although these studies have been numerous and have examined the many aspects of U. S. history textbooks, seldom are textbooks' ethical positions critiqued. In particular, the manner in which textbooks portray democratic ideals is rarely examined.

Based upon a previous study, a significant finding of analyses of the content of U. S. history textbooks is that textbooks often deny the existence of ethical values by presenting knowledge in a technical form, thereby excluding discussion of democratic ideals. Utilizing the work of German

social theorist Jurgen Habermas, evidence suggests that authors seldom put forth effort to make inequality, injustices, and racism problematic or open to discussion. Rather, textbooks often center on Habermas's technical form of knowledge, often evading issues that raise questions concerning democratic values of justice and equality (Romanowski, in press-a, in press-b). This ideological framework promotes an ethical position, one which eliminates any discussion of the ethical choices and serves the pragmatic purpose of supporting particular interests by justifying the text's arguments. Furthermore, this knowledge limits discussion of the appropriateness of governmental and individual action.

Although these findings are important concerning the content of U. S. history textbooks, the major criticism of any content analysis is the acceptance of research based on the examination of textbooks removed from the context of their use. The analysis cannot assume that the knowledge in textbooks is either taught by teachers or learned by students. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that student interaction with the textbook is never unmediated, but rather the various instructional practices and classroom relations control the context in which the textbook is read and interpreted. Teachers mediate and transform text material when they employ it in their classroom. In addition, students bring their own class, race, gender, and individual backgrounds to the classroom which prevents us from assuming that they learn what is taught in class or what they read in the textbook. Gilbert (1989) argues that

> the analysis of text can point to potential, even likely, outcomes in classroom use of text, but it can never conclude with confidence that

> the ideological import of a text as interpreted by the researcher will be similarly realized in the discourse of the classroom (p. 68).

Therefore, it is vital to acknowledge the teacher's role as textbook arbitrator and the difference between the actual "text" and the "text in use."

The Text in Use

Anyon's (1981) study compares the curriculum and the "curriculum in use" and indicates that the same text may yield different meanings according to the context in which content is taught and the knowledge that one brings to the text. How and what students learn from their textbooks highly depends on the specific manner in which the textbook is used. As Luke et. al (1989) argue the "student's relationship with the text is by no means personal and unmediated" (p. 251). Rather, the knowledge that students gain from the textbooks hinges upon the manner in which teachers handle the class text.

Teachers' use of textbooks is saturated with values since textbook usage involves evaluation, judgment, and choice. As Luke et. al (1989) argue, teachers should be considered the modern-day arbiters of textbook knowledge because "the school's text is always the object of teacher mediation. One instructs through the text; a student confronts textual knowledge via teacher mediation" (p. 252). The teacher is granted the authority to make decisions as to what chapters will be covered and in what order, what information should be emphasized at the cost of other content and which textbook questions will be answered and how the responses will be discussed.

Furthermore, teachers determine what is important in the textbook and assign pattern and meaning to the subject matter through the framework they employ when approaching their content area. Therefore, the teacher's orientation toward a subject matter creates "a dialogue between the textbook, their own version of the subject matter, and the class" (Gudmundsdottir 1991, p. 48). McDonald (1988) describes this aspect of teaching as "the teacher's voice." The teacher's values are expressed in his/her voice and permeate teaching methods, conception of learners, and the presentation of the subject matter. In turn, these values shape the development of daily lessons and affect the interpretation of the given textbook. The result is a value-laden personal curriculum that often finds itself in conflict with the textbook.

Exactly how a teacher's personal curriculum affects the use of U. S. history textbooks for instruction is still not very well understood, but we can be sure that whether teachers utilize textbooks with faithfulness or autonomy, "teaching is a reading of the textbook, school, and society" (Cherryholmes 1988, p. 73). Teachers "cannot avoid imparting values in one way or another in the normal course of their activities. . . What we consider 'good,' 'right,' or 'important' constantly guide our practice, whether consciously or not" (Carbone 1987, p. 10). All teachers bring their individual experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and ways of looking at the world to the blackboard. This in turn plays a crucial role in their approach to U. S. history, their use of textbooks and their understanding of democratic ideals. Perhaps studying the manner in which teachers use textbooks

provides an alternative view as to the way textbooks influence students' learning of U. S. history and democratic ideals.

Focus of the Study

The focus of this study centers on how U. S. history teachers utilize secondary U. S. history textbooks. Since many textbooks limit history to technical forms of knowledge, when and how do teachers move historical knowledge into what Habermas labels the "emancipatory interest?" That is, knowledge which emphasizes critical reflection of both the self and the institutions and ideologies that distort the understanding of history. Therefore, I attempt to answer the following questions regarding the knowledge found in U. S. history textbooks:

1) How do teachers utilize previously studied textbooks in classroom situations?
2) How do teachers deal with the technical knowledge of textbooks?
3) What are possible factors that influence textbook usage?
4) Do secondary history teachers engage in and encourage students to engage in critical reflection or emancipatory knowledge?

Teachers and Data Collection

Local schools within a particular mile radius were contacted to determine the textbook used in their U. S. history classes (1900-to present). If a school used one of the five textbooks earlier studied, the

names of history teachers were solicited.[1] Letters requesting participation were sent to individual teachers. Nine teachers fitting this criteria were identified. This group represents four of the five textbooks previously examined, an average of ten years experience teaching U. S. history (ranging from two to 26 years), and of six men and three women. The group represents seven school districts which are characterized as four rural high schools and three city high schools.[2] Concerning the size of the schools in this study, the student populations (grades 9-12) were (250, 307, 450, 854, 1200, 2028, and 2050).

Interviews were arranged with teachers who were willing to participate in the study. All interviews were conducted in the schools of the respondents during the 1993-1994 school year, usually during the teacher's planning period. Assurance of protection of the individual's identity and permission to audio tape the interview were secured. Each teacher participated in one 30 to 45-minute interview. All interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed.

The interviewing process utilized what Schumacher and McMillian (1993) termed the "interview guide approach." In this approach, "topics

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[1] The five textbooks examined in the earlier study are as follows: Berkin, Carol, Alan Brinkley, Clayborne Carson, Robert W. Cherny, Robert A. Divine, Eric Foner, Jeffery B. Morris, Arthur Wheeler, and Leonard Wood. *American Voices.* Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman and Company, 1992; Boorstin, Daniel J., and Brooks M. Kelley. *A History of the United States Since 1861.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990; Bragdon, Henry W., Samuel P. McCutchen, and Donald A. Ritchie. *History of a Free Nation.* Westerville, Ohio: Glencoe Division: Macmillian/McGraw-Hill School Publishing, 1992; Jordan, Winthrop D., Miriam Greenblatt, and John S. Bowes. *The Americans.* Evanston, Illinois: McDougal, Littel and Company, 1988; Todd, Lewis P., and Merle Curti. *Triumph of the American Nation.* Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, Inc., 1990.

[2] The high schools represented in this study are categorized by the criteria used for field experience and student teaching placement. Rural schools are categorized by a student population of less than 10 percent minority while city schools contain more than 10 percent minority population.

are selected in advance but the researcher decides the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview" (Schumacher and McMillian 1993, p. 426). For this study, topics that would possibly develop discussion centering on democratic values within textbook content and the individual teacher's use of the textbook were formulated and then raised in question format during the interview. The guide topics were:

1. Teacher's use of his/her classroom textbook;
2. Impressions constructed by textbooks regarding U. S. history;
3. The purpose(s) of teaching U. S. history;
4. Conflict and controversial issues in U. S. history;
5. Textbook content: textbook objectivity and values embedded in textbooks;
6. Students interaction with textbooks.

This type of interviewing provides the researcher with the means to utilize probing which extends the information and allows additional questions to emerge from the context. This in turn, permits a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and the reasons behind them. In addition, chances are increased that the information will come from the respondent rather than solely being determined by the questions.

Data Analysis

The analysis involved examining the transcribed interviews in search of recurrent themes or response patterns. After several readings, emergent themes were thematically coded and categorized and pertinent quotes were

identified. The multiple readings of the transcripts allowed for a more complete and in-depth understanding of the themes and any possible relationship between the themes. At the completion of each interview, personal notes and comments were recorded. This information was then used to enrich the analysis. The results are presented and illustrated by direct quotes representing the respondents' views.

The study has several limitations. First, the personal knowledge expressed by the teachers in interviews could possibly bear little resemblance to their actual teaching of U. S. history. Often, teachers do things differently in the classroom. It can be argued that too much reliance is placed upon what teachers say about their use of textbooks. Therefore, interviews cannot be solely relied upon in order to draw conclusions about "text-in-use." Additional classroom observations are needed.

Second, in response to the interviewer/college professor, teachers may have designed their responses to fit what they thought were the "correct educational answers" regarding textbook usage.

Finally, this study represents teachers' use of particular U. S. history textbooks. The sample is limited to nine teachers involving four different textbooks and seven high schools. While this study has some limitations, it does, however, represent how nine teachers use various textbooks as a source of technical knowledge and how they utilize the textbook to encourage the students to be engaged with critical reflection.

Results and Discussion

All teachers interviewed expressed the view that the selected classroom history textbook had limitations. Furthermore, most responses regarding the use of history textbooks centered around the idea that the textbook should be viewed and used as a "supplemental source." The following quote by one of the teachers reflects what all nine of the teachers expressed about using the textbook as one of many sources.

> I try to use it as one of many resources. I don't use it as a sole resource for their work. It's kind of a starting point for us. Generally, I use it for the basic information on a particular topic, and then I usually have readings from outside sources that expand on what the textbook doesn't go into detail about.

In addition, all teachers indicated that the textbook provided background information and useful teaching activities, but that most class lectures and discussion go beyond the scope of the textbook. Three teachers were explicit about their view of the textbook and how they used the textbook in their daily instruction.

> I use the text because it's there. I have them read and then I give notes on outside information. I go by what is in the book, but I also give notes on outside information.

> I think the main thing about the textbook is that I use them where they can be used, but, for gosh sakes, you have to do more than that. You've got to use more than the textbook.

> I don't know if cynical is the word, but I do try to point out that there are other things going on that are not mentioned in the book. It shouldn't be seen as a bible of history.

Although all of these teachers viewed the textbook as one of many sources, two teachers demonstrated a strong reliance upon the text to

provide the structure of the class and the content to be studied. For these two teachers, it appears that their actual use of the textbook differed from what they believed regarding the role of U. S. history textbooks. These two teachers indicated that they "follow the textbooks pretty closely."

> Again, it's just something I'm trying to make kids see from a different perspective. So I guess we're in balance with what the book gives, and I try to find other things or some little thing to add. I still try to follow the textbook pretty closely.
>
> I use it everyday, and I teach it pretty much section by section. Sometimes I'll just lecture over a section and have them read it. Typically, I give them a terms list, and a list of questions to go with it, I make up my own.

As mentioned earlier, no matter how teachers utilize textbooks, using a U. S. history textbook is "reading of the textbook, school, and society" (Cherryholmes 1988, p. 73). It is this reading that influences a teacher's approach to the content of U. S. history. At this point, findings suggest that three items play a role in shaping how teachers utilize textbooks which in turn create various impressions of U. S. history. These are: 1) the individual teacher's approach to the teaching of democratic ideals; 2) the beliefs and values of the parents and community; and 3) the individual teacher's ability to critique the structured silences of textbooks.

Democratic Ideals Addressed

All teachers believe that it is important to raise issues that center on democratic values of justice and equality when teaching U. S. history but think it necessary to move beyond the textbook in order to accomplish this goal. The important values described by teachers include: respect for

others, personal responsibility, "anti-racism," equality, justice, freedom, civil rights, and other "moral values."

When teachers were asked how these values are raised in their classrooms, several teachers stated that they have to move beyond the textbook and utilize supplemental sources. In addition, it seems that these values and related issues are raised in a spontaneous manner rather than being planned or integrated within the units or teaching of U. S. history. Few lessons are specifically designed to center on ethical issues or democratic ideals. Rather these issues are raised only when opportunities allow and if the teacher think it is appropriate. In one particular interview, the teacher explicitly addressed how he raised ethical issues in his classroom.

Interviewer: From what you stated, it seems that throughout your teaching you're trying to raise ethical issues.

Teacher: Yes, I think if it's spontaneous, I think that's better than planning it. If you plan it, it almost looks artificial, and that bothers kids because they feel they are being lectured to. If it's spontaneous, and sometimes creative, they don't know it.

Interviewer: Do you intend to do that?

Teacher: Yes, I've got those (ethical issues) in mind. I know where to bring these things in. I know where it has worked in the past, when I said that was a good place to use that, but I don't always write it down. If it comes up and it feels like it's right, I use it. If at the time it doesn't, I don't.

Interviewer: So you really don't have any set lessons or an approach in which you raise issues dealing with democratic ideals?

Teacher: Yes, that's right. . . it depends on the type of class and the students' involvement.

The classroom discussion of democratic ideals which are often controversial, seldom play a dominant role in the teaching of U. S. history. Rather, the teachers interviewed demonstrated that classroom discussion and activities that center on democratic ideals usually occur in a spontaneous manner. Instead of directly incorporating democratic ideals within an overall pedagogical framework, these values are taught "if it comes up and feels like it's right."

Furthermore, secondary U. S. history textbooks often promote this spontaneous approach toward the inclusion of democratic ideals by presenting U. S. history in a technical form thus discouraging discussion of ethical issues and presenting knowledge as natural and objective. Textbooks often limit the portrayal of historical events to that of "objective" facts and concepts which in turn denies that ethical issues are important. This limits discussion of the appropriateness of governmental and individual action. This view of history is disguised under the mask of historical objectivity and is granted the status of truth (Romanowski in press-a). One teacher describes the lack of democratic values within the textbook and describes how he attempts to "train students" to see possible textbook biases. In addition, she describes her attempt to develop discussion about issues centering on democratic ideals while teaching U. S. history.

Interviewer: Are democratic values found in the textbook?

Teacher: Sort of. With a good teacher's guidance, they can be. But it is more likely that you have to add to the textbook. . . which takes time.

Interviewer: So, in order to raise the ethical issues, such as racism and justice, you have to go beyond the textbook.

Teacher: Yes, the text will not do that. The text will say something and the kid might say, at least a thoughtful kid, is that sort of racist? I want the kids to say that at least they can see it.

Interviewer: But you have to train them (students) to see it--beyond the textbook?

Teacher: Yes, some times you do, but in some cases they won't see the biases until you say, Read it again. Now read it again. As soon as I say that, they say, you must be getting at something. You have got to force them to key in on something because they're looking at something else.

Interviewer: How often do you accomplish this type of teaching?

Teacher: There is so much to cover. . . usually when it comes up in the class discussion.

It appears that the main thrust of teaching U. S. history is to cover the required textbook/curriculum material. If time allows, this teacher encourages students to recognize textbook bias but must rely on additional sources. This requires precise time to plan and possibly move beyond the scope of the text and curriculum.

Two teachers addressed this issue and demonstrate that if textbook authors include democratic ideals within the textbook framework or supply good supplemental sources that allow teachers to raise this discussion, then it is more likely that classroom discussion will revolve around these issues.

Interviewer: You stated earlier that your textbook (*American Voices*) brings up and allows you to raise controversial issues and discuss democratic ideals. If you were using another textbook, would you do the same thing?

Teacher: It would be harder. It would take a lot more time. This text gives you supplemental resources, so if it is not brought up in the textbook, you have the option to go to these sources. Also, the emphasis on social history encourages this type of thinking.

Interviewer: What type of thinking are you referring to?

Teacher: A conflict type thinking, opposing viewpoints, you know. I can't praise the textbook enough simply because the authors give you so many ideas and sources. . . . The textbook is also good at making them see both sides to an issue. This makes it easy to raise the important issues that other textbooks might leave out. . . . It is all built into the text; if not, the supplemental sources cover it.

From these teachers' responses, one can argue that if the textbook highlights issues of injustice and inequality, teachers are more likely to develop this type of discussion within the classroom. The two teachers using the textbook *American Voices* portrayed what one teacher termed a "conflict approach" to teaching U. S. history. These two teachers felt that the textbook and the supplemental teacher handbooks supplied ample opportunity to raise issues centering on democratic ideals and other controversial perspectives. It appears that if textbooks present history in a manner that raises controversial issues and centers on democratic ideals, it is possible that teachers will adapt a more reflective type of teaching.

Regarding the textbook, the publishers of *American Voices* (Scott Foresman) supply multiple teacher sources. For example, one supplemental source is titled *Controversial Issues*. These publishers provide primary sources and opposing viewpoints that were used to raise oppositional viewpoints and spark classroom debate. In addition, *American Voices* places a strong emphasis upon social history which often raises issues regarding democratic ideals and controversial issues.

The Subtle Impact of the Community

All nine teachers indicated that their teaching and approach toward U. S. history are influenced by the community in which the school is located. The views and beliefs of the community affect their teaching of history, and, hence, their use of the textbook. The following dialogue between myself and teachers demonstrates this awareness of the values and beliefs of community members and how community beliefs shaped teachers' approach to the study of U. S. history.

Teacher: Our country's history is not devoid of values. I mean, the people who led our country had value systems and you can't teach history in absence of values. This community still has a fairly strong religious base. And, so, within the context of this community, I think that they want, (pause) this community wants American history taught within the framework of some kind of moral values. I do spend some time with the students discussing the role of the Christian ethic and the role religion has played and how lots of American presidents often saw events in light of religious significance. Modern historians and textbooks tend to dismiss the religious significance and not talk about that, and I have a lot of students who are concerned about that. So if I was in another school in a big city or somewhere that would be less emphasized than it is here.

Interviewer: Then, does the community play a role in the way you read and utilize the textbook?

Teacher: Sure, a lot of our students go to Maywood Christian School (name changed) through the first eight grades. That is a conservative Christian school. Then they come here in the ninth grade, so they have a strong foundation in those things (Christian values); they are community members and they have a certain expectation that the school carry a certain amount of that form of religion. For example, I think that there is a judgment to a certain extent in terms of how these people's (U. S. historical figures) actions fit into the Christian ethic, even though knowing there are many other ethics in this country. We do tend to judge the actions of our leaders by the predominant Christian ethic of this community.

It is evident in this teacher's response that the Christian beliefs that these students and community hold are an influential factor in the manner in which he teaches U. S. history. The class addresses the role that religion played in the development of the country, and Christian values are used to judge the actions of leaders and historical figures. This teacher demonstrates the powerful influence that the students, parents, and local community can have on the school's curriculum.

Every teacher interviewed indicated that the climate of the community and related beliefs plays a role in shaping how they approach and present U. S. history to their classes. Students do not enter the classroom as neutral participants, but rather, teachers viewed students as representatives of parental thinking, and hence, the beliefs of the community. These teachers demonstrated an awareness and interest in the positions, values, and beliefs of their students. This concern is expressed in the following discussion as the teacher describes how the values of the family and community might play a role in her teaching.

Interviewer: So in some sense, the purpose of teaching history is influenced by the surrounding community?

Teacher: Sure, definitely. . . . You have to be careful when you teach history, especially when you get into politics. . . . You better not let your viewpoint come across that much.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Teacher: Because kids tend to take the classroom home and bring the home to the classroom. Take the election. If I'm for Bush and I'm pushing Bush in the last election, but I've got a child whose parent is pro-Clinton or pro-Perot, then that can bring a negative attitude between the student, the parent, and myself. So I kind of have to straddle the fence in some way

and let them develop their own viewpoint simply because they have parents that say, This is the way it is and this is what you should think, and that can cause conflicts, and you don't want to set that up. You just simply want them to be open-minded and let them know that you're open-minded, your parents are open minded, and that's how you should be, too. You are sort of a role model.

Interviewer: Is this concern limited to politics or are there other issues to be concerned with?

Teacher: Well, yes, but that depends on the family in this community. There are racists in this community. The first thing I have students do on the civil rights movement, and it's suggested by the book, is write to Martin Luther King and tell him the status of civil rights. From their letters, you can figure out where they stand, and what's funny is you don't only figure out where they stand but where their parents stand as well. Then you can make decisions about your teaching from there.

These nine U. S. history teachers were clearly influenced by the community and slowly became conscious of the community's beliefs and positions through personal and classroom interaction with students. Furthermore, it is evident that students have some power which can be utilized to control the teacher's approach to U. S. history. An awareness of this power on the students' part is another issue, but most teachers demonstrated an awareness of the students' roles in shaping various aspects of their teaching. The following dialogue demonstrates how one teacher becomes aware of the community's and the students' beliefs and how these affect his teaching.

Interviewer: What about Edwardsville (name changed)? Let's say that I took you and put you in a different district. Would you approach history differently?

Teacher: I think there are certain things you have to try and address in this community because of the type of community it is. But if you came in cold turkey, you wouldn't know, so it may take you some time to pick up just on what things you want to focus on, especially if you have something that's a valid point that the

community does not see as important. Students are very conservative in this district.

Interviewer: How does a teacher discover those "things" that should be focused upon?

Teacher: A new teacher will slowly become conscious of the community through interactions with students. . . the questions asked, responses in class and on tests, etc.

Interviewer: So I assume that students bring that conservative view into the classroom?

Teacher: They'll bring in views with regards to politics, with regard to maybe a local issue, or more contemporary historical issues. They'll bring in a dining room table conservative mentality because Grandpa or Dad kind of said so. We try to be objective about the issue, and I usually try to conclude the discussion by saying, You've got to look at both sides and then your right is to decide which you think is most appropriate position to take.

This teacher describes how student responses on tests and in class reveals to him the beliefs of the students and community. In turn, this effects his selection of issues and content and the manner in which he conducts classroom discussion.

Because not all students possess the same level of influence, it is important to consider which students and parents have this power. But more importantly, how do various students shape the teaching of history? Student resistance seems to play a key role in shaping the manner in which history is presented.

Student resistance can be defined as "behavior that takes a conscious, principled, and active stand contrary to the dictates of authority figures of social systems" (Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte 1995, p. 321). Student resistance involves "withholding assent" (Erickson 1987, p. 337). Student resistance takes on more than simply misbehavior; rather "it is principled,

conscious, and ideological nonconformity which has its philosophical differences between the individual and the institution" (Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte 1995, p. 119). In this case, resistance occurs when there is student-teacher disagreement regarding particular views of U. S. history, when teachers and students find themselves holding opposing viewpoints regarding contemporary issues, or when students hold opposing values and beliefs to those of the teachers.

When dealing with resistance, teachers choose two options. First, three teachers reinforce the technical knowledge of textbooks by simply "sticking to the concrete of U. S. history," avoiding controversial issues and attempting to remain "neutral." The textbook is utilized as the authority, seldom questioned and in many cases reinforces the beliefs of the community. This approach eliminates student resistance based on differing philosophical positions. My interview with one teacher demonstrated his acceptance of the particular viewpoint of textbook authors and how this viewpoint reinforces the beliefs of the community.

Interviewer: What impression of America does your particular textbook give to students?

Teacher: I think it is pretty objective. . . . I don't think you see the trumpets blaring and all that stuff. . . . It's a pretty objective view. . . and I follow it pretty closely. It's a very Republican community, and I don't know what else to say other than it's just direct reflection about the kids here. They are conservative and that's fine.

Interviewer: Well, it seems like for the students you are teaching, it is their history in the textbook, and they would agree with the author's positions.

Teacher: I think that's true.

Teachers who hold to this type of textbook usage attempt to avoid the controversial aspects of teaching U. S. history by relying on the "objective facts" that textbooks supply. When asked about possible controversial historical events and how these are dealt with, this so-called objective and non-conflict approach to teaching is evident. In my interview with one particular teacher, she explicitly describes this approach when dealing with the controversial aspects of U. S. history.

Interviewer: How do you handle this conflict in the classroom (racism and discrimination)?

Teacher: I just give them the facts. I just think that when you are looking at a controversial issue, I can say what my opinion would be, but I try not to. I try to remain neutral and not to impose my views. I give them the basic facts, and then let them choose and draw conclusions.

This approach to teaching history assumes that teachers can remain neutral by just teaching "objective" facts and allowing students to draw their own conclusions on the controversial issues in history. Regarding this assumption of objectivity and neutrality, Giroux (1988) argues that what is considered "objective" knowledge in the social studies is often a one-sided and distorted view of the subject. When knowledge is granted the status of objectivity, it is considered to be true, in turn legitimizing a specific view of the world that may be either questionable or patently false. The history provided by textbooks and teachers is never value-free and nonmoral but rather creates and often reinforces impressions and images that later may shape students' explanations, beliefs, and understanding of the world.

Second, six teachers elected to introduce oppositional perspectives and consciously challenged the positions within the textbooks and the

community. This is accomplished through the use of supplemental sources, but in one particular case the textbook *American Voices* provided ample opportunity to engage in this type of teaching. When asked about whose history is found in the class textbook, one teacher demonstrated how the beliefs of the community and the values embedded in the textbooks interact.

Interviewer: Well, it seems to me that for the students you're teaching, it is their history that is in the textbook. I mean, they are white middle class Americans; that's their history. So in a sense, anytime you really criticize it, you are actually criticizing some of the things they and their parents believe.

Teacher: Yes and no. I think that for the most part, the students I have are empathetic to the people who are less fortunate and that they support, for example, FDR's New Deal. We go back and forth about the responsibility of the government to step in and help those who are less fortunate because I think that is a value that they have. I think that although capitalism has worked for them and their families, they also understand the need as Christians. This is a very strong Christian community, and they understand about helping people who are less fortunate.

It is evident in this dialogue between the interviewer and teacher that student beliefs shape the manner in which U. S. history is viewed within this classroom. The teacher's awareness about the affluent community and their Christian values guides her approach to the study of FDR's New Deal programs. She encourages students to view FDR's programs from their Christian upbringing but also allows them to understand how the system has worked for them. This permits students to take the "other's perspective" and possibly allows them to review their own beliefs and positions.

All of the teachers were concerned about student beliefs and how they are influenced by the local community. When teachers were asked what

they do in order to challenge the student and community beliefs, teachers responded in the following manner.

> It's white bred middle class America, you know; it really is. I think that's even more of a reason why to provide some outside things to force the kids to think a little more critically.
>
> I do actually try to emphasize a little bit of civil rights, in a round about way, because I think it is important. Being from an all white community, I think that's important.
>
> I feel compelled to raise those issues (issues of morality) because in rural areas like this, they have a very simplified view of America and American achievements.
>
> I say, here's point A or Opinion A, Opinion B. What do you guys think? Then sometimes we'll sit there and discuss this and that. And that's the thing, you give them both sides and then it's up to them. They can believe what they want.
>
> The textbook can turn off students to issues like race relations. Therefore, teachers must understand the students' beliefs and then be able to introduce race relations into the students' world without too much conflict.

It is clear that these teachers move beyond the parameters of the textbook and begin to raise issues that challenge the beliefs of the community. Most are conscious of this effort and realize there is an element of negotiation between teachers and students.

Structured Silences and Textbook Impressions Seldom Questioned

The history provided by textbooks is never value-free and nonmoral; rather, any U. S. history textbook is ideological. Textbooks create impressions and images that later may shape students' explanations, beliefs, and understanding of the world. Although teachers seemed to be somewhat critical of the content of U. S. history textbooks, the level of critique is often limited to the authors' failure to adequately cover a particular event or

the textbook not offering enough teacher activities. It seems that at the secondary level, most U. S. history classes fail to introduce students to the ideological complexities of knowledge.

Seldom did teachers "lift out" and discuss or critique the structured silences of textbooks. Structured silences are the "givens" that are taken for granted, accepted, considered natural, or go unnoticed. Structured silences systematically exclude particular viewpoints while others are taken for granted. For example, when addressing racism, FitzGerald (1979) reports that although the more recent textbooks mention that discrimination and prejudice exist in the United States, textbooks seldom introduce racial conflict from the perspective of the oppressed. FitzGerald argues that textbooks fail to expose institutional racism, and students learn that discrimination exists only on an individual basis. Silenced within the text are the structures that possibly play a role in injustice and inequality.

It seems that the various teachers can be located on a continuum ranging from unreflective to critical in their analysis of the content of textbooks. For example, when asked about the various impressions and biases of textbooks, one teacher demonstrated an unreflective position which fails to discuss the possible biases embedded within the textbook.

Interviewer: What view of America do you think the text portrays?

Teacher: I don't think you see the real blatant things that go by. I think they (textbook authors) are pretty objective. I don't think you see the trumpets blaring and all that stuff. I mean it's a pretty objective view, and I know they're critical at times, maybe as critical as a textbook for high school kids can be.

Interviewer: It is often argued that there is always a bias in the teaching of history. Do you think there is a bias in the text?

Teacher: I'm sure there is. . . . I can't really, after 11 years point out one specific thing where I feel they go overboard. I don't see it that much.

Although this individual learned about possible textbook bias, there was little evidence of an awareness of the ideological aspects of the textbook. Rather than critiquing the text and developing a complex understanding of the authors' biases, this teacher seems to accept, and possibly trust, the authors' presentation of U. S. history.

Six teachers moved beyond this unreflectiveness and believed that there is a "standard view" of U. S. history that is presented to students. The following teacher interview expresses an awareness of possible textbook bias and ideological aspects of U. S. history textbooks.

Interviewer: Two things you said. They (students) get a "standard view" of history. What is that standard view?

Teacher: Yes, good question. Maybe the one most commonly adopted by all textbooks, you know, or one that is obvious. Well, I think of one that puts the emphasis on American government and American history in the best light. And I don't think that there is anything wrong with that in the sense that one of the purposes of education is to instill civic pride and respect and love for American achievements, and there's nothing wrong with that, but it may be a little one-sided.

Interviewer: Is it pro-American?

Teacher: Correct. One example I can think of is we just finished World War I. The text makes a point in mentioning about the impact of American business interests in terms of getting Wilson to declare war. But the textbook does it in a disclaimer sort of way. They say there really is no evidence that in fact persuaded Wilson to get involved in the war. . . . I noticed that in new editions of other textbooks that (American business interests) have become more of a central theme of why America became involved in World War I. Obviously, the textbook is very reluctant to criticize American presidents for

> whatever reason. They present what they did and then they leave it up to us to provide the evaluation.

This teacher demonstrated awareness of the biases that exist within textbooks. When asked how he deals with this, the response was that "you just try to create a balance."

Finally, one veteran teacher of 26 years described how uncovering and making students aware of the various biases within a textbook serves as a focal point of his teaching. This teacher appeard to understand the element of textual authority and how students and beginning teachers often accept the textbook as "truth." The following dialogue between myself and this teacher demonstrates this awareness of the bias of textbooks and the role of textual authority.

Teacher: . . . and you know you are always going to find biases. But that is okay; I tell the kids to expect that.

Interviewer: You make a great point that history is clearly biased. Now, when students come into your class, do you think that they are conscious that the textbook is biased?

Teacher: I don't think students are conscious of bias until you point out why that (the textbook) might be biased. It's very easy for students, and I think young teachers, to read the text and assume; Okay, no problems it's just history.

Interviewer: This is very interesting, you are the first teacher to discuss the biases of textbooks. Well, then, what do you think is the overall impression that students gain from reading the textbook?

Teacher: Let's say that most students read a textbook thinking this is history the way history was. Once I give them the impression that this is biased, obviously they're wanting to know what is the other side. . . . The text I use is written from a fairly liberal persuasion, very strong in terms of teaching multiculturalism. . . . The problem is that the text simply inserts minorities into American history. They don't incorporate it into history. . . .

> They separate it too much, and I think that is in error. And this is where the biases come in.

Emancipatory forms of knowledge or this "deeper" level of critique were seldom realized by most U. S. history teachers. Although, none of the teachers interviewed discussed the term ideology or raised questions regarding the "givens" of U. S. history, when biases were recognized, teachers responded by presenting alternative viewpoints for students to see the "other's perspective." However, this may not be a conscious effort on the teacher's part.

It seems that veteran teachers who possess a sound historical background and a strong interest in U. S. history are more often reflective about their teaching and the content of U. S. history textbooks. In addition, experienced teachers appear to depend less upon textbooks and publishers' supplemental resources.

Responses and Conclusions

The authority of the textbook is clearly not absolute. Textbook knowledge does not pass perfectly from text to the student. Rather the the way a teacher handles the given textbook and related materials determines the impressions of U. S. history that students have the opportunity to learn. Furthermore, just because teachers possess the ability to critique and challenge U. S. history textbooks, they do not necessarily engage in this process with any consistency.

This research raises several important aspects of textbook usage and the teaching of U. S. history at the secondary level. First, all teachers

interviewed saw the textbook as a starting point and believed that each textbook needed to be supplemented with additional sources. Although this is how teachers responded during interviews, three teachers follow the textbook rather closely. Even though additional sources were addressed, the textbook seems to remain as the dominant teaching tool determining the scope and sequence of most U. S. history courses.

Two of the nine teachers utilized the textbook *American Voices* and discussed their frequent use of supplied supplemental sources. This appears to indicate that if textbook authors provide supplemental sources that work in conjunction with the text, teachers are more likely to teach in this manner.

Second, the findings demonstrate that teachers believe it is important to raise democratic ideals within the teaching of U. S. history. These values include equality, justice, freedom, civil rights, anti-racism, and other moral values. All the teachers were concerned with issues of time and felt that raising democratic ideals and related issues during class discussion should be done in a spontaneous manner. Two teachers that used the textbook *American Voices* accomplished this task on a more regular basis and demonstrated that the teaching of democratic ideals could be integrated within an overall teaching framework. Again, there was a reliance upon the textbook publishers to supply the material that could be integrated within the content of the textbook since time and coverage were major teacher considerations.

Therefore, teachers must be taught and encouraged to systematically incorporate moral frameworks based upon democratic ideals within the

teaching of U. S. history. Rather than a spontaneous effort based on student involvement or when "it feels right," teachers must be capable of presenting U. S. history through a pedagogical framework that centers on democratic ideals. Various events and actions within the U. S. history curriculum must be discussed in light of the ethical or unethical behavior that influenced particular action. Teachers must be capable of directing student thinking toward discussions of social justice and equality within the context of U. S. history.

Third, all teachers indicated that the beliefs of students and community influence the manner in which they approach U. S. history and their use of the textbook. Various teachers discussed the climate of the community, how students bring these views into the classroom, and how they deal with the various beliefs.

In response, teachers need to develop a broader understanding of the local community and the social, cultural, and political forces that shape the students in their school district. In addition, it is important to understand the role that student resistance plays within classroom discussions and student responses. Teachers must learn to use pedagogical strategies that are able to move beyond student resistive behaviors and encourage students to engage in critical reflection of the self, the culture, and the institutions and ideologies that influence one's understanding of the world.

Finally, it appears that there is a range in the teachers' abilities to discuss and critique both the structured silences and biases of textbooks. Three teachers were rather unreflective and somewhat accepted the textbook portrayal of U. S. history. They spent little time addressing the

biases of textbooks within their classrooms and gave little thought to the structured silences.

The remaining teachers consciously understood the role of biases and two argued that there was a standard view of history that textbooks put forth. The remaining teachers attempted to draw attention to students that biases existed, and they presented oppositional viewpoints in an effort to reveal author biases. Still, there was little discussion regarding ideology and structured silences.

In response, teachers must be capable of penetrating the "ideological sub-texts embedded in their history textbooks, and also the contradictions within these ideologies" (Carlson 1989, p. 53). In this case, ideology is viewed as a "set of assumptions of which we are barely conscious but which nonetheless directs our efforts to give shape and coherence to the world" (Postman 1992, p. 123). This taken for granted knowledge and the interests it serves goes unquestioned, and it is only in the creation of classrooms where students can come to grips with the issues created by the destruction of textbooks' meaning that they can begin to understand the reason why of things and the way the world works. Until teachers are conscious of the ideologies embedded within the text, teachers and students are passive victims of the meanings imposed by textbooks.

In closing, for a democracy to survive and flourish, schools must develop critical thinking and socially conscientious students who are willing and capable of extending the democratic ideals of equality and social justice to the economic, political, and social arenas. This type of instruction requires that teachers own the analytical tools needed to interrogate the

ethical aspects of knowledge that appear to be an objective and universal portrayal of reality. This process begins by developing strategies that encourage critical reflection. This type of education offers teachers and students the opportunity to not only identify, challenge, and rewrite their own histories but also to rethink and demystify the particular U. S. history endorsed by textbooks.

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